

Message Text

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PAGE 01 BELGRA 05098 160726Z

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C O N F I D E N T I A L BELGRADE 5098

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E.O. 11652: GDS

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SUBJECT: IMPACT OF COMINFORMISTS ON US-YUGOSLAV RELATIONS

REF : BELGRADE 4761

1. SUMMARY. YUGOSLAV CONCERNS OVER CONSEQUENCES OF COMINFORMIST CONSPIRACY ARE BEGINNING TO SURFACE DESPITE OFFICIAL LINE THAT IT WAS RELATIVELY HARMLESS. IN DEMONSTRATING ANEW FUNDAMENTAL SOVIET DISLIKE FOR TITOIST YUGOSLAVIA, AFFAIR HAS FOCUSED YUGOSLAVS' ATTENTION ON IMPORTANCE OF TRADITIONAL US SUPPORT FOR THEIR INDEPENDENCE. THERE ARE ALREADY INDICATIONS THAT THEY WOULD WELCOME A CONCRETE REAFFIRMATION OF OUR SUPPORT; THIS OFFERS CONSIDERABLE POTENTIAL IN TERMS OF OUR INTERESTS. END SUMMARY.

2. IN DISCUSSING COMINFORMISTS SINCE CONCLUSION OF TRIALS SEPT 20, YUGOSLAVS HAVE ADHERED TO PUBLIC PARTY LINE THAT ACTIVITIES OF PRO-SOVIET GROUP WERE MINOR, ISOLATED AND RELATIVELY HARMLESS, SIGNIFICANCE OF WHICH SHOULD NOT BE OVERRATED. AT SAME TIME, WE ARE TOLD MATTER SHOULD NOT BE UNDERESTIMATED AND PUBLIC STANCE SCARCELY CONCEALS DEEPER CONCERNS WHICH ARE NOW BEGINNING TO SURFACE. THE GOY HAS STATED PUBLICLY THAT WHEN SOCIALIST PARTIES WERE INFORMED ABOUT ACTIVITIES OF GROUP, LCY GOT ASSURANCES THAT THEY WILL HENCEFORTH CONTROL YUGOSLAV EMIGRE COMMUNITIES LIVING IN THEIR COUNTRIES. LCY SECRETARY GRICKOV PRIVATELY TOLD AMBASSADOR THAT SOV AND CZECH REPLIES SO FAR DID NOT SATISFY

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 BELGRA 05098 160726Z

YUGO DEMANDS AND RELATIONS WITH SOCIALIST COUNTRIES WILL

SUFFER IF THEY FAIL TO CRACK DOWN ON EMIGRES. AND ONE OF PRIMIN BIJEDIC'S STAFF AIDES ACKNOWLEDGED TO US THAT GOY IS INDEED CONCERNED ABOUT COMINFORMISTS "ESPECIALLY SINCE A GREAT POWER IS INVOLVED". NONETHELESS, PUBLICLY AND PRIVATELY THE YUGOSLAVS STATE THEY WANT TO MAINTAIN NORMAL OVERT RELATIONS WITH BLOC COUNTRIES.

3. TO YUGOSLAV LEADERSHIP THERE IS NO PARADOX IN CONTINUING NORMAL RELATIONS WITH SOVIETS DESPITE THEIR SUSPICION, STRENGTHENED BY RECENT EVENTS, THAT SOVS DO NOT WISH TITOIST YUGOSLAVIA WELL. YUGOSLAV NONALIGNED POLICY REQUIRES SUPERFICIAL EVENHANDEDNESS IN DEALING WITH SOVIETS AND WEST. AND NONALIGNMENT IS CRITICAL TO YUGOSLAVIA SINCE IT PROVIDES A SMALL, WEAK COUNTRY WITH A FORUM FOR EXERCISING POLITICAL INFLUENCE FAR BEYOND WHAT IT COULD DO ALONE OR BY ALIGNING WITH A POWER BLOC. MOREOVER, FOR YUGOSLAVIA, IN A SENSE NONALIGNMENT PROVIDES A FORM OF COLLECTIVE SECURITY.

4. THE YUGOSLAVS DO NOT WANT TO BE RESPONSIBLE, OR EVEN SEEM TO BE RESPONSIBLE, FOR ANY WORESENING OF RELATIONS WITH MOSCOW AND THE WARSAW PACT NOW WHEN TITO IS IN HIS TWILIGHT YEARS.

5. FROM THE YUGOSLAV STANDPOINT THERE IS ONE OUTSTANDING DIFFERENCE BETWEEN SOVIET AND US THREATS TO THEIR INTERESTS. THE SOVITES HAVE JUST BEEN CAUGHT AGAIN TRYING TO UNDERMINE TITO AND BRING YUGOSLAVIA BACK INTO THE INTERNATIONAL SOCIALIST FOLD. BUT THE US, WHILE REGARDED AS AN ADVERSARY OF NON-ALIGNMENT, POSES NO THREAT TO YUGOSLAVIA PER SE, AND ALL YUGOSLAVS KNOW THIS. ON CONTRARY, US SUPPORT FOR YUGOSLAV INDEPENDENCE IS SEEN AS A PRINCIPAL THWART TO SOVIET DESIGNS ON YUGOSLAVIA.

6. SO THE CENTRAL POINTS FOR US TO ADDRESS AT THIS JUNCTURE ARE: WHAT DO RECENT EVENTS PORTEND FOR YUGOSLAV-SOVIET RELATIONS, AND WHAT OPPORTUNITIES DO THEY PRESENT FOR FORWARDING US POLICY INTERESTS.

7. THE EFFECT ON YUGOSLAV - SOVIET RELATIONS WE BELIEVE IS CLEAR. THE YUGOSLAVS WILL CONTINUE THEIR EFFORTS TO KEEP BOTH PARTY AND STATE RELATIONS ON AN EVEN KEEL BECAUSE THIS SERVES CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 BELGRA 05098 160726Z

THEIR PRACTICAL INTERESTS. BUT, IF RESPONSIBLE YUGOSLAV LEADERS EVEN FELT THAT THIS PROCESS WOULD LEAD TO A RELATIONSHIP BASED ON TTRUST AND CONFIDENCE, AND THIS IS DOUBTFUL, THEIR HOPES HAVE NOW BEEN RUDELY SHAKEN.

8. IT IS IN THIS CONTEXT THAT WE SEE AN OPPORTUNITY FOR US POLICY INITIATIVES. FOR A QUARTER CENTURY US POLICY, SUBTLE AND SENSITIVE IN ITS IMPLEMENTATION, HAD PROMOTED AND

SUPPORTED INDEPENDENCE OF YUGOSLAVIA FROM SOVIET HEGEMONY WHILE FULLY AWARE THAT A FUNDAMENTAL WESTERN REORIENTATION OF THE YUGOSLAVS WAS NEVER IN THE CARDS. ALTHOUGH DIFFERENCES BETWEEN US AND YUGOSLAV POLICIES ON SPECIFIC ISSUES HAVE BEEN A CONTINUING SOURCE OF IRRITATION, IN BROAD TERMS OUR POSTURE TOWARD YUGOSLAVIA HAS SERVED OUR INTERESTS WELL. WE BELIEVE CURRENT SITUATION OFFERS US OPPORTUNITY TO DEEPEN OUR ASSOCIATION WITH YUGOSLAVS IN WAY WHICH WILL ADVANCE OUR INTERESTS IN THIS CRITICAL COUNTRY. THERE ARE ALREADY INDICATIONS THAT YUGOSLAVS WOULD WELCOME THIS. NOW, IN WAYS THEY HAVE NOT DONE IN RECENT YEARS, THEY HAVE SIGNED A NOTABLE WARMING IN OUR RELATIONS WITH CIVILIAN - PARTY AND GOVERNMENT - AND MILITARY INTERLOCUTORS. FOR EXAMPLE, GRILICKOV QUICKLY AGREED TO MEETING WITH AMBASSADOR AND DURING CONVERSATION HE ASSURED AMBASSADOR THAT HIGH PARTY FUNCTIONARIES WOULD ONCE AGAIN BE ACCEPTING IVP GRANTS TO VISIT US.

A. WE SHOULD EXPLOIT MORE RECEPTIVE CLIMATE TO TRY TO DISPEL APPARENT SUSPICION IN MINDS OF TITO AND OTHERS IN LEADERSHIP - ALREADY EXPRESSED PUBLICLY - THAT US HAS HAD ROLE IN OVERTHROW OF SOME OF YUGOSLAVIA'S NONALIGNED FRIENDS AND HAS SOMEHOW WISHED TO MEDDLE IN TRIESTE ISSUE ON ITALIAN SIDE. DESPITE OUR OFFICIAL DENIALS, FACT THAT TITO APPARENTLY REMAINS UNCONVICTED ACCOUNTS FOR PERMEATION OF SUSPICION OF OUR MOTIVES THROUGH OFFICIAL AND PUBLIC SECTORS OF COUNTRY.

B. WE CAN BEST DO THIS BY RESTATING AND GIVING MORE POSITIVE CONTENT TO OUR TRADITIONAL SUPPORT FOR YUGOSLAV INDEPENDENCE AT TIME OF SECRETARY'S VISIT. MOST EFFECTIVE WAY OF PROVIDING MATERIAL UNDERPINNING TO POLICY STATEMENT, IN OUR VIEW, WOULD BE OFFER TO GOY OF POSSIBLE ALTERNATIVE SOURCE FOR SOPHISTICATED MILITARY EQUIPMENT WHICH EMBASSY BELIEVES YUGOSLAVIA NOW IN MARKET FOR. WE SHOULD INDICATE WE WOULD BE RECEPTIVE TO EARLY DISCUSSION OF ARMS SUPPLY POLICY

CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 04 BELGRA 05098 160726Z

STRESSING THAT WE ARE LOOKING TO THE LONGER TERM AND NOT JUST PROPOSING A ONE-TIME THING.

9. WE COULD ALSO USEFULLY SIGNAL OUR READINESS TO INTENSIFY DIALOGUE WITH YUGOSLAVS, ON VISITS OF RANKING US OFFICIALS AT MEASURED INTERVALS - BOTH CIVILIAN AND MILITARY. OSD/ISA ASST SECRETARY ELLSWORTH COULD LEAD OFF AND GET THE YUGOSLAVS FOCUSED ON THE POTENTIAL OF THE US AS A SOURCE OF MILITARY EQUIPMENT TO RELIEVE DEPENDENCE ON SOVIETS. A LATER VISIT BY THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE COULD MARK THE PROGRESS MADE. STRICTLY MILITARY-TO-MILITARY CONTACTS COULD BE ACCELERATED. ON CIVILIAN SIDE, CONSIDERATION OF VISITS OF SECRETARIES OF DEFENSE AND BUTZ SHOULD BE REACTIVATED, AND THE INVITATION TO BIJEDIC GIVEN PRIORITY CONSIDERATION. CONSULTATIONS AT THE SENIOR EXPERT LEVEL ON CURRENT PROBLEMS AND ISSUES COULD

USEFULLY SUPPLEMENT HIGH LEVEL VISITS AND KEEP YUGOSLAVS
ENMESHED IN CONTINUING DIALOGUE - WHICH NOT ONLY HELPFUL
TO THEM AS PROP FOR THEIR INDEPENDENCE - BUT USEFUL TO US IN
URGING STATEMENTS AND BEHAVIOR DESIGNED FACILITATE, NOT
OBSTRUCT, ONGOING NEGOTIATIONS.
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